

The Attempt to Lay a Cable Between the Hawaiian Islands

Anne Hamilton Stites

During a period of ten years, from December, 1887 until May, 1897 four men, at varying intervals, headed efforts to establish telegraphic communication between the Hawaiian Islands by means of a submarine cable. That they were ultimately unsuccessful is more a reflection of the vicissitudes of the Hawaiian Government than of a lack of persistence and tenacity on their part. For these were the years when the monarchy was plummeting to disaster. These were the years, too, when men were able to build vast fortunes by imaginatively capitalizing on new inventions. Such were the men who worked for the inter-island cable—men of vision, men of means.

Two of them, Judge Herman A. Widemann and Colonel Zephaniah S. Spalding, may be counted as Island men. They were successful entrepreneurs, pioneers in the Hawaiian sugar development. The other two, Audley Coote and James Sherman Bartholomew, were men on the way up; the former's forte was advertising and promotion, the latter's more pedestrian, a knowledge of electrical engineering. It would be he, the least flamboyant of the group, who actually laid a cable between the Islands. It would be he, who could least afford the adventure, who in all probability lost most financially when the cable broke, for his business future was jeopardized by the cloud of scandal evoked.

Before December 16, 1887, the date authorizing a formal contract to be made between the Hawaiian Government and the Honorable Audley Coote of Tasmania,¹ a man on Maui, Charles H. Dickey, the first person in the Islands to use the telephone and promote it,² wrote Major C. T. Gulick, Chief Clerk of the Department of the Interior, for information about channel depths between the Islands. "I am in communication," he said, "with the cable manufacturers of England and America and need to know all the facts before I can get a positive estimate of the cost of putting cables in."³ He felt that laying cable in the three channels between Oahu and Hawaii was not particularly appealing for outside capitalists, but that it would be of such benefit to the "Heavy Planters" and "Honolulu Merchants" that they could be per-

Anne Hamilton Stites produced this paper for Dr. C. H. Hunter's class in Hawaiian history at the University of Hawaii, in the spring of 1968.

sueded to donate at least three-fourths of the expenditure, which he estimated would be around \$100,000. The Government could then make up the balance. "I think it can be done. Whitney will work for it on Hawaii. I will work for it here. Will you work for it on Oahu?"⁴ He was evidently silenced forever, according to official records, by Gulick's formal reply that nothing was known about the depths of the channels.⁵ There was no hint of encouragement, a desire to cooperate, or an acknowledgment that here was a good idea.

Unlike Dickey, however, Audley Coote was *never* silenced on his projections of things to be brought into being. His promotional effort in Hawaii started about 1878 with inquiries concerning the development of railroads.⁶ This was followed up in 1880 by a bid to lay cables between the Islands, either on (1) a direct cash contract covering the manufacture, laying, and putting in working condition of the cables before turning them over to the Government, or (2) an agreement to furnish the capital and maintain the line (with the Government paying interest for a number of years), reserving the privilege to buy the cable at any time.⁷ Not receiving any invitation to follow up his tentative offer, he evidently came to Hawaii anyway, and was fortunate enough to have an audience with the King through the kindness of A. S. Cleghorn. This he mentions in a letter asking Cleghorn to put in a good word for him with the Government about the possibility of laying a Pacific cable touching the shores of Hawaii—especially if Cyrus Field did not have an exclusive concession.⁸ And now he begins to get a nibble from no less a person than W. M. Gibson, who within a few years would for all practical purposes have usurped the power of government in the Islands.⁹ In all probability their correspondence, leading to the Act of 1884 for the encouragement of ocean cables, knocked out the possibility of a binding contract being made with the Hawaiian Cable Company, which had gone so far as to take soundings and make a definite proposal to the Government for the laying of a cable between the Islands.

On February 13, 1882 Charles R. Bishop, John H. Paty, C. O. Berger, and H. A. Widemann filed a petition in the office of Minister of the Interior W. N. Armstrong, for a charter for the Hawaiian Cable Company. The stated purpose of the company was to lay ocean cables between the various islands of the Hawaiian group, erecting telegraph lines, so that the Kingdom would have telegraphic and telephonic communication. The amount of capital stock to be issued would be \$200,000. Of those subscribing, Charles R. Bishop had the largest amount.¹⁰ On March 20, 1882 the petition and draft of the charter were presented to His Majesty in Privy Council by Armstrong.¹¹ Mr. Henry M. Whitney moved to amend the charter by inserting a clause permitting the Government the privilege of buying the cable when in working order so that it could be operated in connection with the Post Office. Mr. A. F. Judd moved its reference to a committee. So it was decided that he, Widemann and Armstrong would be the committee to iron out the rough spots. Interestingly enough, on that same day, Armstrong signed the charter of incorporation of The Planters' Labor and Supply Company, one of whose charter members was Z. S. Spalding.¹²

Before the Privy Council met again to consider the report concerning the application of the Hawaiian Cable Company for a charter, the Ministry of Green, Walker, and Armstrong was out, and the Ministry of Gibson, Kaai, Bush, and Preston in.¹³ But all that was accomplished at the meeting was the adoption of the report recommending the granting of the charter with certain amendments.¹⁴ The papers were then sent by Judd to the new Minister of the Interior, Simon K. Kaai on May 29.¹⁵ And that was that. Nothing more was done. On September 11, Berger, acting as manager for the hoped-for company, wrote expectantly that they were in the process of organizing, were even ready to take soundings. He wondered "how far and under what conditions His Majesty's Government will grant us pecuniary assistance?"¹⁶ There was no answer.

Two years later the company organizers tried again; rumors were about that someone else was trying for a concession. The new Minister of the Interior, C. T. Gulick, was sent the original draft of the charter of the Hawaiian Cable Company, a copy of the report of the Privy Council, and a new draft of the charter with the suggested amendments.¹⁷ And this time there was better fortune, though short-lived indeed; the company was granted the right to incorporate on January 21, 1884.¹⁸ A few days before there had been editorial comment—it was good to hear that the matter of cable communication between the Islands was being taken in hand "with vigor" by the current Government. Three months before proposals had been received from abroad, and now the original promoters had decided to have another go at it.¹⁹

The charter was promptly accepted, and H. A. Widemann was chosen president; his son-in-law, C. O. Berger, secretary and treasurer; and H. R. Macfarlane, vice-president.²⁰ Equally promptly Charles Gulick was asked by Widemann to submit the company's proposal of action and a tentative contract to His Majesty and His Cabinet. The Hawaiian Cable Company planned to establish telegraphic and telephonic communication between the islands of Oahu, Molokai, Maui, and Hawaii, terminal points to be at Honolulu on Oahu and at Hilo on Hawaii. After this had been accomplished the company wanted the exclusive right to carry out further communication, not only within the Kingdom, but with foreign countries. It was expected that the Government would grant a certain sum of money to aid the enterprise, after which no more would be expected. Widemann concluded with the promise: "The company agrees to commence operations immediately upon execution of the contract. . . ."²¹

At the same time W. D. Alexander, Surveyor General, was asked to furnish a man from his department to help the company take the necessary soundings with the understanding that once on the job he would be on their payroll and subject to their orders.²² Alexander was delighted at the prospect of obtaining such information as would be discovered for his own records and those of other scientific men, and in writing Gulick, who he felt would be the proper person to answer for the department, he suggested that the condition for giving assistance should be that both results of the work and the record of such work should be deposited in his office.²³ Thus, Gulick replied to both Wide-

mann and Berger in the same letter, letting them know that before any definite contract could be entered into by the Government, "careful soundings and surveys of the ocean bed to be crossed by the contemplated cable will have to be made and prepared," and that duplicates of the work should be filed at the office of the Surveyor General. Captain George E. G. Jackson had been assigned to help them, and it would be possible for the Government to give some financial help.²⁴

In reply Berger sent an estimate of the anticipated expenses, asking for a grant of \$10,000.²⁵ And on March 3, 1884 he was able to report that the sounding party aboard the *W. H. Reed* had completed work in the Hawaii-Maui Channels and was working in the Molokai Channel, and that since expenses had only amounted to \$6000, he would like permission to go ahead and do the Kauai Channel, which had not been bargained for.²⁶ He was told to proceed, and the Kauai soundings were evidently taken.²⁷ From then on there was bad news. The new attorney general, Paul Neumann, had turned down the offer made by the Hawaiian Cable Company before it set out on its soundings.²⁸ The message was relayed to H. A. Widemann that his offer was declined because the department "deems it impolitic to bind the Government to a contract which is left to the option of the other party, no matter how short a time such option may be granted."²⁹ In August the company was requested to send vouchers for the \$6800 they had received from the Government to carry out the soundings, and to hand over the charts. But the records kept by Captain Jackson were not obtained until 1886.³⁰

It is only by examining the Gibson-Coote correspondence that this treatment of a local company already in the field can be understood. From the moment Gibson responded in December, 1882 to Coote's overtures, the eventual outcome could practically be predicted. With each successive letter was an offer; Coote was determined to hit the jackpot. After the King's speech opening the Legislative Assembly of 1884, in which he had said that both inter-island and trans-oceanic cables would be submitted for consideration "as a national Hawaiian enterprise," Coote came up with the names of the "influential gentlemen" for whom he was acting: the Duke of Manchester, Sir Julius Vogel, Sir Charles Bright, John Muirhead of Latimer Clarke, Muirhead & Company, Ltd., the Hon. Howard Spensley, and the Chairman of the British India Steam Company.³¹ These men were willing to negotiate concerning the laying of a cable between Hawaii and San Francisco and Hawaii and Australia as well as connecting up the various islands. However, since they were trying to get concessions from the various governments, it was vital to keep the matter confidential. And another thing: If the Hawaiian Government wanted to keep island communication in their own hands, this work could be handled separately for a stated sum.³² Evidently it was the name-dropping that determined Gibson's next moves, for he was now convinced that Coote could follow through on his grand schemes. But how was he to persuade the Legislature, since the matter of appropriations had become a very touchy subject?

On August 7 Gibson asked not for money, but that the Government be given the right to make arrangements with the Australasian Cable Syndicate, a group working out plans to lay a Pacific cable. Certainly Hawaii did not want to miss inclusion in something that would help the business community. Also, the Syndicate would lay an inter-island cable. As the Minister of Finance had said earlier, no funds should be granted in the current session to aid telegraphic communication. Nor should any future amounts be put to such a purpose that were not "commensurate with the resources of the Kingdom." Certainly, the offer was at the moment far too high for the Government to even consider, but with more talks and power to act, this could be handled to Hawaii's advantage.³³ This was considered by a special committee, which recommended that an act be passed stipulating an amount that the Legislature thought would not be a strain on the revenue, and that the Government be given permission to communicate officially with the Syndicate.³⁴ The result was Act LXI, authorizing the payment of \$20,000 for a period of 15 years to anyone establishing telegraphic communication between Honolulu and San Francisco.³⁵ The King spoke of his pleasure at the favorable outcome of the Assembly's deliberations on ocean telegraphy.³⁶ Coote was pleased, too.³⁷

Others besides Coote were interested in cooperating with the Hawaiian Government. Abraham Hoffnung wrote Gibson on July 5, 1886 that a Mr. H. R. Armstrong would be coming to the Islands "with several important objects in view."³⁸ Not only was Mr. Armstrong, a partner in the firm of Skinner & Company, London, planning to lay the groundwork with Gibson for a national loan act, but was prepared "to negotiate and conclude an agreement with the Telegraph Construction and Maintenance Company, Ltd. of London for the delivery and laying of submarine cables to connect in telegraphic communication such Islands of the Kingdom for which communication may be desired."³⁹ To substantiate this Armstrong had a letter of verification with him containing the definite offer of Admiral George Henry Richards, managing director of the London telegraphic firm. Both an inter-island system and a connection with North America would be attempted if the Hawaiian Government would agree to certain conditions. The cables were to be laid at the company's expense but to be operated at Government expense. The company was to be granted a subsidy of 1,500 pounds for a period of 25 years after the opening of the line. For having established telegraphic communication between the Islands the company wanted the exclusive right to land cables on any of them from any part of the world for five years. When communication was completed between Hawaii and North America the right was to be extended for 40 years. The Islands would be connected up within fifteen months of the signing of the agreement.⁴⁰

But much had to be done before Gibson could act on this proposition. From July, 1886 to July, 1887 he and Kalakaua would be playing musical chairs with the Cabinet, trying every possible maneuver for the necessary authority to float a national loan. They were finally successful, but there was a stipulation; it was necessary "to define the uses to which the money borrowed shall be applied."⁴¹ The Act was passed on September 1, 1886. The sum of

\$250,000 had been earmarked for inter-island cable communication.⁴² This was not the final word, for on October 6 there was an amendment. Only \$100,000 was set aside, the amount to be used for electric light in Honolulu and for the inter-island cable.⁴³

Armstrong in the meantime had returned to England to raise money for the loan. Gibson asked him to make contracts for lighting the city of Honolulu as well as for the cable.⁴⁴ These plans were stymied because of the great changes of 1887 in the Hawaiian Government. A few months before the Green-Thurston Ministry took over, Armstrong wrote to Luther Aholo, Minister of the Interior, that Audley Coote had contacted him, thinking that the \$100,000 appropriated in the Loan Act would be readily available. Coote proposed three alternatives for joining four islands of the Hawaiian group, omitting Kauai, by telegraphic cable: (1) a cash payment, (2) a subsidy, (3) a guarantee of a certain amount of interest upon the cost of the cable. And though Armstrong, who had been made Consul General for Hawaii in England, acted in his official position to discourage Coote, he still passed the offer on to the Government, not knowing the exact conditions in the Islands.⁴⁵ Armstrong was told he had acted correctly and that a trans-ocean cable would be pushed first.⁴⁶

Plans were under way to form a company "*to raise money* for buying, laying, constructing, and maintaining telegraphic cable communication between the Hawaiian Islands and the coast of California in the United States of America, and also between the Hawaiian Islands and the Empire of Japan."⁴⁷ William G. Irwin, Henry F. Glade, Peter C. Jones, Herman A. Widemann, and James Campbell filed a petition for the Pacific Cable Company, which would have a capital stock of \$1,000,000, three-fourths having been subscribed for, the largest number of shares, 5,500, being under the name of Cecil Brown, "Trustee."⁴⁸ A charter was granted them on July 3, 1889 and accepted on August 27, 1889. A. S. Hartwell, a Harvard man, was made president; Cecil Brown, vice-president; W. O. Smith, secretary; P. C. Jones, treasurer; C. R. Bishop, auditor.⁴⁹ Hartwell, in the meantime, had asked Lorrin A. Thurston, the new Minister of the Interior, for an exclusive franchise, to which Thurston replied that the "prime object" was to obtain cable communication with North America, and the Government was not going to tie itself up in any way to prevent anyone from accomplishing this goal. Furthermore, there was still in existence the exclusive privilege granted in 1887 to Audley Coote, which could not be canceled if Coote were able to provide "assurances that the cable shall be laid not later than August 1, 1890 from some point on the North America continent to the Hawaiian Islands."⁵⁰ During November, 1889 the Cabinet met informally with a committee from the Pacific Cable Company concerning the Government guarantee the company hoped to obtain on the interest to be given on the bonds issued.⁵¹ At one of these meetings a charter was granted the Hawaiian Pacific Cable Company.⁵² This was the only firm that succeeded in laying cable between the Islands.

In July, 1888 James Sherman Bartholomew signed a contract with the Government granting "the sole and exclusive right and privilege" for the construction, laying, and maintaining of a submarine electric telegraph cable to connect

Hawaii to Kauai by a line running from Hawaii to Maui, from Maui to Oahu with a landing on Molokai, and from Oahu to Kauai. Payment of \$8000 would be made when the system was working between Oahu and Maui; another \$8000 for the connection in working order between Oahu and Hawaii; \$9000 upon completion between Oahu and Kauai in working condition. Armed with this agreement, Bartholomew proceeded with his partner Edgar Crow Baker of Victoria, British Columbia to order all of the materials necessary for the venture.⁵³

Evidently their mutual telegraphic interests had brought these two men together. Bartholomew had his degree as an electrical and telegraphic engineer from the New York Electrical College in Poughkeepsie. He had been treasurer and then assistant superintendent of Pullman's Pacific Car Company. Later he became manager of the Burlington Route Telegraphs at Omaha, Nebraska, and officer in charge of a U.S. Signal Station. His relative, Charles Bartholomew, had been in charge of the Atlantic Cable Station at Trinity Bay, Ireland during the cable laying of 1858.⁵⁴

Baker had been a lieutenant in H.B.M.'s Navy for eighteen years. After retirement he went to the province of British Columbia and was most influential in gaining its admission to the Canadian Dominion. At the time of forming the partnership with Bartholomew, he was secretary-treasurer of the Victoria & Esquimalt Telephone Co., the Kaimloop [sic] Telephone Co., the Victoria Electric Light Co., and general agent for British Columbia for the Bell Telephone Co.⁵⁴ It would seem that Baker was the well-established businessman, who could put up sufficient capital to get the venture started.⁵⁵

It would take Bartholomew over a year to get back to Hawaii with his supplies, "about 18 carloads" of white cedar telegraph poles that had seasoned at Chemainus; cables and land lines; testing, operating, and construction instruments; buoys, mushroom anchors, grapples, and special apparatus to work out of the coral, and batteries. He visited the cable stations at New York, Halifax, Victoria, and Vancouver as well as cable companies. Unfortunately, he chose the wrong company for the manufacturing of his cable, the Bishop Gutta Percha Company of New York. Three times they failed to meet the deadlines set up. The main reason was their having heated the gutta percha while applying the outside coating of Clark's compound, which had caused faults in the insulation. Thus, many miles of cable had to be rejected. Failure to supply the cable wrecked the sailing schedule. The schooner *Triumph* had been chartered at Victoria and drastically altered to take care of the special cargo. Four months she was kept in the harbor waiting for the cable to come from New York. Finally, she was released, having had to be refitted. Getting another ship proved most difficult, so that it was not until sometime in August that work began on laying the cable.⁵⁶

By December 10, 1889, Bartholomew reported from Molokai that the submarine cable had been laid between Pukoo, Molokai and Napili, Maui, that the land lines on Maui were completed with the exception of three or four plantations on the extreme southern part of the island, and that one section of line had been completed on Molokai. He pleaded for bits of land in Honolulu,

Oahu; Kamalo, Molokai; and Wailuku, Maui for his main stations on those islands. He needed most space at or near Honolulu for his factory and storehouse, for the temporary shed which was being used as a storehouse was far too small. "We are compelled to store our compounds, tar and asphalt at McQueen and Jackson Warehouse, North King Street, Honolulu. Our heavy cordage, buoy, and grappling cables at E. O. Hall & Sons Warehouse, South King Street, our models and some light machinery and all testing and operating instruments at No. 5 Wellington Place, and some 500 or 600 sacks with other sundries stored at another place near the Oceanic S.S. Wharf."⁵⁷ He added that his request was in line with Section 3, Chapter XLV approved on August 4, 1874. This was the act to encourage any company incorporated or to be incorporated "for the transmission of intelligence by electricity."⁵⁸

Not having heard by December 26, Bartholomew wrote again, making the same request, only more emphatically. Thurston had delayed, for he needed time to formulate his answer. J. A. Hassinger, chief clerk, looked up the law for him. Section 2 of Chapter XLV of the Session Laws of 1874 clearly stated that the Minister of the Interior was authorized to set aside land for telegraph stations; however, the law of 1888 giving the Minister of the Interior the power to make a contract with J. S. Bartholomew contained no such conditions. So Thurston wrote that he simply did not understand on what basis Bartholomew made his request. "Do you claim under your franchise the Government should furnish at Government expense the necessary land . . . or do you mean you desire me to exercise the right of eminent domain for your benefit and at your expense?" If the former, then Thurston felt it was impossible; if the latter, he felt it would be more expensive than private negotiation. The best bet was to use the unoccupied Government land on the Esplanade for putting the cable together.⁵⁹

On January 8, 1890 the land line from the Kamalo Cable Station to Kalae had been completed, and within three days it was expected to be extended from Kalae to Kalaupapa.⁶⁰ Thus Molokai was getting its system ready to be connected up with the submarine cable already laid to Maui and with the cable yet to be laid to Oahu. By April 3 only ten miles of land line remained to be done on Molokai. This was the day for the completion of the laying of the Oahu-Molokai submarine cable. The day before, the first cablegram ever received in Honolulu was sent from the cable ship *Caterina*, which was being towed by the Government tug, *Eleu*. It was sent special to the *Daily Pacific Commercial Advertiser* at 9:45 a.m. on April 2, 1890: "From cable ship *Caterina*, 14 miles out Koko Head: 14 miles cable laid in Oahu Channel. Fair weather; signals perfect." On the morning of April 4 at 2:30 a.m. Bartholomew sent a message from the Cable Station at Koko Head: "Cable laid to Molokai at 4 p.m. yesterday. Impossible to make shore end connection owing to heavy surf. The natives took cable ashore. Nothing else could be landed. Expect to arrange communication as soon as weather moderates. Galvanometer tests show conductivity and insulation fairly good."⁶¹ Seemingly, there was never more than this to report favorably about the system.

Kalakaua at the opening of the legislative session of 1890 did not specifically mention the unsatisfactory condition of the Island cable, but spoke rather of the arrangements being made for the Pacific cable. "We shall deem it wise with your concurrence to pledge the credit of the Hawaiian Kingdom for such purposes. . . ." ⁶² The committee appointed to answer the King's speech said that the Assembly shared his hope for the cable, but questioned the wisdom of pledging the nation's credit. When it was moved that the reply should be adopted, Thurston objected. He felt more time for thorough consideration should be given the matter. J. Nawahi did not agree, for the report was all that was necessary. The committee could not go into every detail, "cannot mention, for instance, that the cable already laid has broken in several places." J. E. Bush said that it was important to know whether the Government planned to subsidize "rotten cable." ⁶³

During an afternoon session, T. R. Lucas offered a resolution calling for an inquiry into an alleged conspiracy of a hardware firm of the city of Honolulu against the Hawaiian Pacific Cable Company. After much argument it was turned over to the standing committee on Commerce and Agriculture. This was on the 26th of May. ⁶⁴ For three successive days thereafter open letters appeared in the paper. The first, to the Minister of Finance, was from James Bartholomew, speaking as president of the Hawaiian Pacific Cable Company. A certain hardware firm had tried to collect from the Government \$8000, the first installment of the Government subsidy for laying the inter-island cable. This had not been authorized by the Company, for the cable between Honolulu and Wailuku was not in good working order. Though about 55 miles of land lines had been run across Oahu, Molokai, and Maui, a part of the cable connection had proven defective; thus no money could be collected. ⁶⁵ E. O. Hall & Sons replied to this that they realized Mr. Bartholomew was referring to them, but the truth of the matter was that Baker and Bartholomew had assigned the first installment to a New York firm, and in August of the preceding year it had made inquiries. ⁶⁶ W. F. Allen wrote that on August 23, 1889 the Bishop Gutta Percha Company of New York had asked him to collect the \$8000 on the assignment made over to them that had been contracted between the Minister of the Interior and James Sherman Bartholomew. This was five months before the Hawaiian Pacific Cable Company was even chartered. ⁶⁷

The Committee on Commerce, Agriculture, and Manufacture did not present their report to the Assembly until July 21, 1890. According to them a charter had been granted around December 31, 1889 to the Hawaiian Pacific Cable Company. The officers of the Company were James Sherman Bartholomew, Edgar Crow Baker, president and vice-president; W. W. Hall, auditor; and E. O. White, secretary. "The capital stock amounts to \$100,000 of which Bartholomew and Baker were given 601 shares of \$100 each in consideration of the transfer to the Company of all the property owned by them in connection with the cable enterprise here." Hall and White had each received ten shares because of the Company's indebtedness to E. O. Hall & Sons. Bartholomew and Baker had given Mr. Jonathan Austin 30 shares in payment of debts owed

him. Seventy more shares had been turned over to him as a retainer fee to protect their interests and straighten out difficulties existing before the formation of the Company. The balance of the stock, 379 shares, remained unsued.⁶⁸

The Hawaiian Pacific Cable Company had been receiving goods free of duty. E. O. Hall & Sons had been charging and crediting these goods on their books, and then disposing of a large part to the Maui Telephone Company. No fraud on the revenues of the country had been perpetrated, as both the Hawaiian Pacific Cable Company and the Maui Telephone Company were entitled to import their apparatus and outfit duty free. But it easily could have been a fraudulent deal. "In consequence of our investigations, other transactions of E. O. Hall & Sons in the entry and disposition of telephone goods came to our knowledge which we think are similarly irregular. We recommend that immediate action be taken by the Government to prevent any further repetition."⁶⁹

Prior to the report of the Committee on Commerce, Agriculture, and Manufacture, Lucas had proposed an Act to extend the time for the completion of the inter-island telegraph cable.⁷⁰ This, in turn, was given to a committee to investigate. Bartholomew appeared before them and admitted that he had learned by "expensive experience," \$20,000 worth, that the cable he laid was not the right type for Hawaiian waters. He still wanted to try. So the committee recommended that he be granted another chance, for it was only just that the man have an opportunity to make up the serious losses he had incurred.⁷¹ But never again was there an attempt to actually lay another cable between the Islands. Efforts from then on would be talk and paper work.

In 1895 Z. S. Spalding told the Government that he had been "gathering facts and figures" about an inter-island cable and a Honolulu-California Cable. This was welcome news to Mr. S. B. Dole, President of the Republic of Hawaii. One week later there was passed an Act to repeal XLI of the Session Laws of 1884; XXVII, 1887; XIV, 1888; and LXX, 1890, thus clearing the books for the new Act that would give Dole the authority to make a contract with Spalding.⁷² Eleven days later, by a Joint Resolution a contract was approved.⁷³ Unfortunately, matters were not so simple in Washington. And when Spalding sought to get his time extended and his exclusive right transferred to the Pacific Cable Company of New Jersey, which he formed to combat the Pacific Cable Company of New York, he found that Hartwell, who had tried to revive his Pacific Cable Company, had thrown his weight in favor of the New York firm. Hartwell was just one among many. Though the New York company finally agreed to put in an inter-island cable with the trans-oceanic, the whole deal fell through when Hawaii became a territory.⁷⁴

Rumors have persisted that the five principal islands of Hawaii were connected by cable and that several messages were sent before the cable broke. The records do not show this. Cable was laid between Molokai and Maui, and between Oahu and Molokai, but no message seems to have been transmitted via cable from any island to another. The only cablegram sent and received was from the cable ship fourteen miles away from Oahu. This was due to the

efforts of James Sherman Bartholomew, president of the Hawaiian Pacific Cable Company. The only other company which accomplished anything concrete was the Hawaiian Cable Company, headed by Herman A. Widemann. It managed to take soundings, for which it was paid by the Government. Bartholomew received no financial help from the Government, and little encouragement from the Hawaiian community. The Coote and Spalding efforts never progressed beyond the planning stage.

However, all of these men deserve recognition for attempting to introduce the new electric technology into the Islands. That they failed was in large measure due to the political turbulence of the years 1887-1897. Natives, accustomed to chiefly control and tribal sanctions, were ill-prepared for rapid accommodation to the "old" technology of Western civilization built upon literacy, much less to push communication by cable. As it was, few of the haoles, while striving for a more stable government, Western-style, realized the potential of this new "extension of man".⁷⁵ There was then no single head of the Hawaiian state or ministry to continuously back either a private or a public effort to build the cable. There can be little wonder that, faced with these obstacles, this early effort at inter-island communication foundered.

NOTES

¹ Hawaii *Session Laws*, 1887, Chap. XXVII, 46-51.

² See William A Simonds, *The Hawaiian Telephone Story* (Hawaiian Telephone Company in honor of their Seventy-Fifth Anniversary, 1958), pp. 1-5.

³ C. H. Dickey to Major C. T. Gulick, April 11, 1878, ID, Telegraphs, Telephones, Cables, 1871-1883, hereafter TTC, with appropriate date.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Gulick to Dickey, May 27, 1878, IDLB, XV, 139.

⁶ Minister of the Interior (Wilder) to Audley Coote, Sept. 4, 1878 and Oct. 2, 1878. IDLB, XV, 277 and 305.

⁷ Audley Coote to Minister of Public Works, June 30, 1880, TTC, 1871-1883.

⁸ Audley Coote to A. S. Cleghorn, Nov. 9, 1882, *Ibid.*

⁹ Audley Coote to W. M. Gibson, Feb. 10, 1883, FO & Ex, in which Coote acknowledges Gibson's letter of Dec. 22, 1882, FOLB, LX, 70. Cleghorn had given Coote's letter to Gibson.

¹⁰ In 1915 several hundred companies formerly active in Hawaii were dissolved and disincorporated under Chap. 181, Revised Laws of Hawaii, 1915 as amended by Act 57, Hawaii *Session Laws*, 1915, pp. 60-61. Each company's documents were placed in a dissolved file, hereafter cited as a number, such as No. 71. AH. Subscribers were C. R. Bishop, E. P. Adams, J. H. Paty, C. O. Berger, H. A. Widemann, and W. W. Hall. Each had 200 shares, except Bishop, with 500.

¹¹ PCR, XIV, 32.

¹² PCA, Mar. 25, 1882.

- ¹³ Armstrong in his role as Attorney General was on the committee with Judd and Widemann. He was also acting in the capacity of Minister of the Interior in the absence of H. A. P. Carter in Portugal. See Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 1874-1893 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967), p. 252.
- ¹⁴ May 27, 1882, PCR, XIV, 38.
- ¹⁵ No. 71.
- ¹⁶ C. O. Berger to J. E. Bush, Sept. 11, 1882, TTC, 1871-1883.
- ¹⁷ Minister of the Interior to C. O. Berger, Jan. 16, 1884, IDLB, XXIII, 478.
- ¹⁸ Charter Book, III, 119-123.
- ¹⁹ *Daily Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Jan. 19, 1884. Listed in the paper at that time was the Cabinet: W. M. Gibson, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Premier; John M. Kapena, Minister of Finance; C. T. Gulick, Minister of the Interior; W. M. Gibson, Attorney General ad interim; W. M. Gibson, President of the Board of Health and the Board of Education. With Gulick and Kapena, Gibson made up the Board of Immigration.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, Jan. 22, 1884; Minister of the Interior to Berger, Jan. 25, 1884, IDLB, XXIV, 16.
- ²¹ H. A. Widemann to Charles T. Gulick, Jan. 23, 1884, TTC, 1884-1886.
- ²² C. O. Berger to W. D. Alexander, Jan. 23, 1884, *Ibid.*
- ²³ Alexander to Gulick, undated note, *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ Gulick to the Hawaiian Cable Co., Feb. 1, 1884, IDLB, XXIV, 33-35.
- ²⁵ Berger to Gulick, Feb. 4, 1884, TTC, 1884-1886. Charter of the steamer was \$1500; engineers to take soundings and make maps, \$1700; sinkers, cups, shots as per contract with Honolulu Iron Works, \$900; sounding machine, \$800; sundry materials as per list of engineers, \$500; coal, \$2000; salaries to captain, mate, and crew, engineers and 4 men and whale boat, \$1700; one whale boat complete, \$225; one skiff complete, \$50; provisions, \$1500. With 20% added for contingencies, this totaled \$13,050.
- ²⁶ Berger to Gulick, Mar. 3, 1884, TTC, 1884-1886.
- ²⁷ Department of Interior to Berger, Mar. 7, 1884, IDLB, XXIV, 164. Curtis J. Lyons, the government meteorologist, stated that these soundings were on file in the Government Survey Office (PCA, Nov. 28, 1901). They could not be located in May, 1968.
- ²⁸ P. Neumann to Minister of Interior, April 14, 1884, TTC, 1884-1886.
- ²⁹ Gulick to Widemann, April 14, 1884, IDLB, XXIV, 268.
- ³⁰ Gulick to Widemann, Aug. 14, 1884, IDLB, XXV, 72-73. Hassinger to Bickerton, May 21, 1886, IDLB, XXVIII, 20.
- ³¹ Journal of the Legislative Assembly, 1884, p. 1. AH. Hereafter JLA. Kalakaua spoke on April 26 and made a point of the fact that soundings had been taken, "by order of my minister of the Interior," between the islands; Coote to Gibson, June 10, 1884, FO & Ex.
- ³² *Ibid.*
- ³³ Report No. 808, Aug. 5, 1884, Legislative File, hereafter LF. AH. Also PCA, Aug. 8, 1884.
- ³⁴ Report No. 831, presented on Aug. 14, 1884, LF. On the committee were J. Mott Smith, W. E. Rowell, Walter M. Gibson, William O. Smith, Chas. R. Bishop.
- ³⁵ *Hawaii Session Laws*, 1884, Chap. XLI, 80-81. Also JLA, 1884, pp. 246, 252, and 264.

- ³⁶ JLA, 1884, p. 281.
- ³⁷ Coote to Gibson, Sept. 4, 1884, FO & Ex.
- ³⁸ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 1874-1893, p. 295.
- ³⁹ Undated handwritten letter, Armstrong to Gibson, marked received by the Interior Department on Aug. 23, 1886, TTC, 1886-1889.
- ⁴⁰ Richards to Messrs. Skinner & Co., July 8, 1886, *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹ *Hawaii Session Laws*, 1886, Chap. XI, 19; Chap. XV, Amending XLI, Session Laws of 1884, p. 23.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, Chap. XI, 20.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, Chap. XXXVI, 57-59.
- ⁴⁴ Armstrong to Gibson, Oct. 28, 1886, acknowledging Gibson's letter of Sept. 23, 1886. TTC, 1886-1889.
- ⁴⁵ Armstrong to Aholo, April 20, 1887, *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ Armstrong to Minister of the Interior, July 13, 1887, *Ibid.* This letter acknowledged the letter of June 3 from the Interior Department stating approval of the advice to Coote.
- ⁴⁷ No. 116, 1915.
- ⁴⁸ Members of the firm were William G. Irwin, Henry P. Baldwin, Herman A. Widemann, James Campbell, Peter C. Jones, Samuel N. Castle, William O. Smith, Samuel M. Damon, Paul Isenberg, George N. Wilcox, John Thomas Waterhouse, Henry F. Glade, Mark P. Robinson, Cecil Brown, Thomas H. Hobron. Campbell and Baldwin had 500 shares; Jones, Robinson, and Hartwell, 250; Widemann, 200; Bishop had 500, too. The prime mover was the owner or owners of the 5,500 shares. No. 116, 1915.
- ⁴⁹ Charter Book, IV, 25-31. AH. Smith to Thurston, Aug. 27, 1889, No. 116, 1915.
- ⁵⁰ Hartwell to Thurston, Aug. 23, 1889, TTC, 1886-1889; Thurston to Hartwell, Sept. 6, 1889, IDLB, XL, 38. Coote had been notified that his exclusive privilege was for three years only and that one-half of the period had already gone by, W. H. Bailey to Coote, May 9, 1889, IDLB, XXXVIII, 520. For the story of this company see unpublished thesis of Pauline N. King, *Hawaii's Part in Attempts to Build a Trans-Pacific Cable, 1893-1898*, 1965, and W. D. Alexander, "The Story of the Trans-Pacific Cable," Hawaiian Historical Society, *Annual Report*, XIX (1911). The primary purpose of the Pacific Cable Company of Hawaii was "to raise money."
- ⁵¹ CCMB, 1887-1890. Meetings held without Kalakaua.
- ⁵² *Ibid.* The charter was granted on November 15, 1889. It would not be accepted until December 30, 1889. Charter Book IV, 52-55.
- ⁵³ *Hawaii Session Laws*, 1888, Chap. XIV, 33-36. The contract was dated July 31, 1888, No. 122.
- ⁵⁴ PCA, Jan. 2, 1890.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ Bartholomew and Baker to Lorrin A. Thurston, Jan. 21, 1889; J. Sherman Bartholomew to Lorrin A. Thurston, June 11, 1889, TTC, 1886-1889.
- ⁵⁷ Bartholomew to Thurston, Dec. 10, 1889, *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁸ *Hawaii Session Laws*, 1874, Chap. XLV, 43-45.
- ⁵⁹ Bartholomew to Thurston, Dec. 26, 1889; Thurston to Bartholomew, Dec. 27, 1889. TTC, 1886-1889. There is a pencilled note signed JAH with a squibble about the laws.

- ⁶⁰ Bartholomew to Thurston, Jan. 8, 1890, TTC, 1890-1891. This letter was acknowledged with the message that the matter of furnishing land for the Honolulu Telegraph Station, storehouse, cable factory, and repair works; the Kamalo Telegraph Station, and the Wailuku Telegraph Station had been referred to the Cabinet. Peterson to Bartholomew, Jan. 9, 1890, IDLB, XLII, 132.
- ⁶¹ DPCA, April 3 and 4, 1890.
- ⁶² DPCA, May 22, 1890.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, May 27, 1890.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, May 28, 1890.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, May 29, 1890. Allen to Minister of the Interior, Aug. 23, 1889, TTC, 1890-1891.
- ⁶⁸ Report No. 73, LF, 1890. The petition for a charter for the Hawaiian Pacific Cable Co. had been made by Edgar Crow Baker, Francis Baker, James Sherman Bartholomew, H. Severance Bartholomew, and L. P. Severance, having subscribed to shares in the following amounts: E. C. Baker, 490; Francis Baker, 10; Bartholomew, 485; H. S. Bartholomew, 10; L. P. Severance, 5. No. 122, 1915.
- ⁶⁹ Report No. 73, LF, 1890. The Maui Telephone Co. was granted a charter on April 25, 1889. Members of the firm were H. P. Baldwin, R. D. Walbridge, T. W. Everett, F. L. Stolz, W. J. Lowrie, A. F. Hopke, and G. P. Wilder. Dissolved No. 107, 1925. AH. (E. O. White was secretary, treasurer and director of E. O. Hall & Sons; W. W. Hall was its president, DPCA, Jan. 2, 1890.)
- ⁷⁰ Report No. 101, LF, 1890.
- ⁷¹ Spalding to the President and the Cabinet, Aug. 3, 1895, TTC, 1892-1900; Hawaii *Session Laws*, 1895, Act 13, pp. 15-16; Act 17, pp. 22-25. Section 6 of this new act required *full information* concerning the size, weight, composition, and character of the cable. Thus, Spalding's contract gave these specifications. FO & Ex. 1895.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, Joint Resolution, pp. 101-102.
- ⁷³ See W. D. Alexander and P. N. King.
- ⁷⁴ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1965.) This interpretation uses the McLuhan thesis that media are extensions of man. He develops, too, the contrast between the old, mechanical age and the new, electric age. The world, due to "instant information", has now become a "global village."